

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Canceled)

2. (Currently amended) An ion elution unit that generates metal ions from electrodes when a drive circuit applies a voltage between the electrodes,

~~wherein polarities of the electrodes are reversed cyclically with a voltage application halt period placed in between, and eluted metal ions are either silver ions, or copper ions, or zinc ions~~
wherein metal ions eluted from the electrodes are either silver ions, copper ions, or zinc ions,

wherein the ion elution unit comprises a water feed valve for feeding water to the ion elution unit,

wherein the electrodes are disposed along water current feed, and

wherein, when the water feed valve is feeding water to the ion elution unit, the drive circuit reverses polarities of the electrodes cyclically by alternating a voltage application period with a voltage application halt period.

3. (Canceled)

4. (Currently amended) The ion elution unit according to claim 2, wherein the drive circuit varies the applied voltage applied to the electrodes is so varied such that a constant current flows between the electrodes.

5. (Currently amended) The ion elution unit according to claim 2, further comprising:
a current detection unit for detecting current flowing between the electrodes; and
a controller for controlling the entire ion elution unit,

~~wherein current flowing between the electrodes is detected by a current detection means, and the drive circuit is controlled based on the detection data, and a check of operation of the~~

~~current detection means is carried out before the application of a voltage to the electrodes is started~~

wherein the controller controls the drive circuit based on the current flowing between electrodes detected by the current detection unit, and operation of the current detection unit is checked before the voltage starts to be applied to the electrodes.

6. (Currently amended) The ion elution unit according to claim 2, further comprising:
a current detection unit for detecting current flowing between the electrodes; and
a controller for controlling the entire ion elution unit;

~~wherein current flowing between the electrodes is detected by a current detection means, and the drive circuit is controlled based on the detection data, and operation of the current detection means is started when a predetermined period of time passes after the application of a voltage to the electrodes is started~~

wherein the controller controls the drive circuit based on the current flowing between electrodes detected by the current detection unit, and detection operation of the current detection unit is started a predetermined period of time after the voltage starts to be applied to the electrodes.

7. (Currently amended) The ion elution unit according to claim 2, further comprising:
a current detection unit for detecting current flowing between the electrodes;
a warning indicator; and
a controller for controlling the entire ion elution unit,

~~wherein current flowing between the electrodes is detected by a current detection means, and the drive circuit is controlled based on the detection data, and when the current detection means detects abnormal current, a warning means notifies it to users~~

wherein the controller controls the drive circuit based on the current flowing between the electrodes detected by the current detection unit, and, when the current detection unit detects abnormal current, the warning indicator issues a warning to notify a user of abnormality.

8. (Currently amended) The ion elution unit according to claim 7, wherein even if the current detection means unit detects abnormal current, ~~the warning means does not notify users of the abnormality on condition that~~ so long as normal current has been detected at least once during an ion elution process, the controller does not give the warning indicator an instruction that makes the warning indicator issue the warning to notify the user of the abnormality.

9. (Currently amended) The ion elution unit according to claim 2, further comprising:
a current detection unit for detecting current flowing between the electrodes; and
a controller for controlling the entire ion elution unit,
~~wherein current flowing between the electrodes is detected by a current detection means,~~
~~and the drive means is controlled based on the detection data, and when the current detection means detects that the value of the current flowing between the electrodes is a predetermined level or under, the lengths of the voltage application period and/or the voltage application halt period or the ion elution period are adjusted~~

wherein the controller controls the drive circuit based on the current flowing between the electrodes detected by the current detection unit, and, when the current detection unit detects that the current flowing between the electrodes is equal to or less than a predetermined level, the controller controls the drive circuit to adjust the length of the voltage application period and/or voltage application halt period with respect to the electrodes, or the length of the ion elution period.

10. (Previously presented) An appliance that incorporates the ion elution unit as set forth in claim 2 and uses water mixed with metal ions generated by the ion elution unit.

11. (Currently amended) The appliance according to claim 10, further comprising:
a controller for controlling the entire appliance,
~~wherein the ion elution period is adjusted according to the amount of water used~~
wherein the controller controls the drive circuit to make the drive circuit adjust the ion elution period according to the amount of water used.

12. (Currently amended) The appliance according to claim 10, further comprising:
a controller for controlling the entire appliance,
~~wherein the lengths of the voltage application period and/or the voltage application halt~~
~~period are adjusted according to the amount of water used or the length of ion elution period~~
wherein the controller controls the drive circuit to make the drive circuit adjust the length
of the voltage application period and/or voltage application halt period with respect to the
electrodes according to the amount of water used or according to the ion elution period.

13. (Currently amended) The appliance according to claim 10, further comprising:
a flow rate detection unit for detecting the volume of water flowing in the ion elution
unit, and
a controller for controlling the entire appliance,
~~wherein a flow rate detection means is provided to measure the volume of water flow in~~
~~the ion elution unit, and the lengths of the voltage application period and/or the voltage~~
~~application halt period or the ion elution period is adjusted based on the measurement~~
wherein the controller controls the drive circuit based on a result of detection by the flow
rate detection unit to make the drive circuit adjust the length of the voltage application period
and/or voltage application halt period with respect to the electrodes, or the ion elution period.

14. (Currently amended) An appliance that incorporates the ion elution unit as set forth in claim 5, ~~and wherein~~ when the current detection ~~means-unit~~ detects abnormal current, the controller executes specified countermeasures ~~are adapted.~~

15. (Original) The appliance according to claim 14, wherein the specified countermeasure is a temporary stop of the appliance operation.

16. (Currently amended) An appliance that incorporates the ion elution unit as set forth in claim 5, ~~and wherein~~ when the current detection ~~means-unit~~ detects that ~~the value of the current~~

flowing between the electrodes is equal to or less than a predetermined level ~~or under~~, the controller controls the water feed valve to make the water feed valve reduce the volume of water flow fed to the ion elution unit ~~is reduced and~~ controls the drive circuit to make the drive circuit extend the ion elution period ~~is extended~~.

17. (Original) The appliance according to claim 10, wherein the appliance is a washer.

18. (Original) The appliance according to claim 11, wherein the appliance is a washer.

19. (Original) The appliance according to claim 12, wherein the appliance is a washer.

20. (Original) The appliance according to claim 13, wherein the appliance is a washer.

21. (Original) The appliance according to claim 14, wherein the appliance is a washer.

22. (Original) The appliance according to claim 15, wherein the appliance is a washer.

23. (Original) The appliance according to claim 16, wherein the appliance is a washer.

24. (Currently amended) An ion elution unit that generates silver ions by applying a voltage between ~~silver~~ electrodes disposed in a water feed passage, comprising:
a drive circuit for applying the voltage between the electrodes; and
a water feed valve for feeding water to the ion elution unit,
~~wherein polarities of the electrodes are reversed cyclically~~
wherein, when the water feed valve is feeding water to the ion elution unit, the drive circuit reverses polarities of the electrodes cyclically by alternating a voltage application period with a voltage application halt period.